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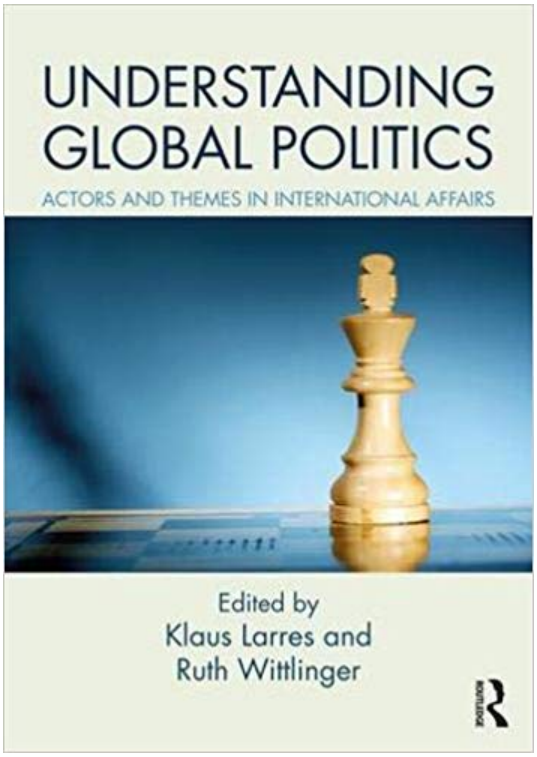

Chapter 20

Failing States and Statebuilding

Jutta Bakonyi

In the 1990s, state failure and statebuilding entered the vocabulary of international policy, development and academic forums, and think tanks. Both concepts were discussed, researched and advanced in reports, journals, policies and strategy papers. They populated databases and matrices, initiated research projects, and culminated in the establishment of commissions, research centres, institutes and journals. With a combination of descriptive (failure) and prescriptive (building) features, these twin concepts are an example of the co-operation between academia and policy.

While both concepts emerged in tandem, they were further developed through collaborative conceptual-theoretical and political practice, critique and reflection upon this practice (Bueger and Bethke 2014). They sparked scholarly works, guided a growing number of international interventions, and increasingly structured North-South relations. Recent statistics show that fragile states received 38% of overseas development assistance (OECD 2014, 24). The first part of this chapter discusses the rise of these twin concepts. It differentiates with Carment et al. (2010) two generations of the state failure/statebuilding discourse, and outlines how they were embedded in broader political and socio-economic developments. The second part points to theoretical and conceptual implications and questions the empirical utility of the state failure concept. The third and last section provides an overview of the main critiques. While it uses Cox's (1981) differentiation of problem-solving versus critical approaches, it also shows that the arguments of both camps often

overlap. The chapter concludes with a summary of the critique and provides a short outlook into the currently evolving third generation of the failure concept.

Genealogy of State Failure and Statebuilding

Failing states, fragile states, collapsing, disintegrating and weak states – these characteristics are frequently, and often interchangeably, used to describe the decay of the political, and subsequently social and economic order in a country, and to outline the implications this disruption has for international security. The concept gained prominence at the end of the Cold War. It was then embedded in a more general discussion on the future of the state in the context of globalisation (Strange 1995), and the debate on new wars (Kaldor 1999), which interpreted the increasing number of civil wars as an expression of a wider state crisis in the postcolonial world (also Gros 1996). An influential early volume (Zartman 1995), described state failure as a (increasingly violent) process that manifests itself in a downward spiral of institutional and societal disintegration. In the worst case, such as in Somalia, this can lead to the complete collapse of central authority, leaving behind deeply divided societies that are trapped in cycles of violence and humanitarian crisis.

Two types of interventions were swiftly designed, one to prevent weak or failing states from collapsing, the other to deal with the unruly outcomes of state failure. Prevention measures were integrated into the good governance agenda that dominated international development in the 1990s and aimed at enhancing the capacity and performance of state institutions (Scott, 2007). Simultaneously, peacekeeping was expanded into peace-making and peace-enforcement, and an increasing number of military interventions, among them also humanitarian interventions, were deployed to deal with violent conflicts (Doyle and Sambanis 2006). Reflecting the dominant view that peace can only be achieved in democratic states with a functioning market-based economy, a view summarized as liberal peace

(Richmond and Franks 2011; Sabaratnam 2011), the new generation of peacekeeping interventions promoted both democratisation and the establishment of a market-based economy. Humanitarian interventions initially aimed at providing aid to starving populations, but their mandate was, such as for example in Somalia, soon expanded to include peace- and statebuilding. In some cases, these interventions even took over governmental and administrative functions, such as in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo or East Timor.
The at best, modest success of the first generation of international interventions led to the insight that political and economic liberalisation can only work on the basis of solid institutional frameworks (Ghani and Lockhart 2008, esp. 152-153). The need to 'establish, reform and strengthen state institutions where these have been seriously eroded or are missing' (Rocha Menocal 2011, 1719) was by the end of the 1990s summarized as statebuilding. Peacebuilding was by then increasingly subsumed to statebuilding (Paris 2002; Call and Cousens 2008; Chandler 2010).

The rise of interventionist approaches in the 1990s required a redefinition of state sovereignty, the dominant principle in international relations. This was enabled by the discursive shift from national or state security to human security, which placed the individual at the centre of security considerations (Booth 2007; Hoogensen and Stuvoy 2006). The promotion of human security was followed by the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), which advocates the practical application of human security in the form of humanitarian interventions in failed states, that is states that are identified as either being too weak or unwilling to protect their own citizens (ICCS 2001). The blurring of boundaries and the reconfiguration of the political and legal (Teitel 2003), development and security fields at the end of the Cold War led to the closer alignment of foreign policy goals with development and humanitarian aid (Duffield 2001; Hettne 2010). This also laid the groundwork for the second generation of the state-failure debate and statebuilding practice.

While the first generation of state failure theory and practice interpreted failure mainly as domestic problems, at worst with regional implications (Yannis 2002), the attacks of 9/11 changed this view. State failure was now (as reflected in this handbook) added to the list of global threats and brought to the forefront of international (security) politics. Failing states were denounced as 'breeding grounds' for international terrorism and were held responsible for unleashing dynamics that threatened international security, and with it the wealthy states in the global North. State failure soon subsumed a variety of risks and threats, ranging from terrorism and organised crime, human trafficking and large scale migration, to global economic threats, infectious diseases and other health hazards. They were even seen as endangering American values and morals (Weinstein et al. 2004, 9). The power of the state failure concept lies in its ability to connect these threats with a broad range of other problems, such as poverty, institutional inefficiency, economic decline or corruption. The second generation of the state failure debate thus links discourses that were previously separated in the differentiated domains of development, defence, international law or foreign policy, and embeds them, or, as critical authors would claim, subordinates them conceptually and operationally into a security framework (Duffield 2007).

Guided by the assumption that only effective and capable states are able to promote development and to counter security challenges, statebuilding became a priority in international politics, and was used to deal with the variety of problems and failures that were discursively connected in the state failure framework (Scott 2007; Rocha Menocal 2011). This discursive convergence found its operational equivalent in 3-D (defence, diplomacy, development) or 'whole government' approaches to statebuilding. These approaches aimed at the integration of previously disparate military, humanitarian, development, legal and political actions and resources (Collinson et al. 2010). The term failure was now broadened to fragility (Collinson et al. 2010, 16-17; Manning and Trzeciak-Duval 2010) taking account of

the non-linear and gradual dynamics of state decay. State fragility implies different degrees of disintegration, while failure was left to characterise extreme cases of state collapse (Brinkerhoff 2007, 2-3). On the operational side, the term stabilisation gained prominence as an interventionist approach that offers more than mere peace-enforcement but falls short of wider statebuilding aims (Muggah 2014, 1). Several countries established specialised departments, offices or tasks forces to facilitate interdepartmental co-operation in their attempt to promote stability and statebuilding. The United Kingdom, for example, set up the tri-departmental Post Conflict Reconstruction Unit in 2004 (in 2007 renamed the Stabilisation Unit) comprising the Ministry of Defence (MOD), Department for International Development (DFID), and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). Another example is provided by the United Nations' establishment of a Peace Building Commission in 2005, which aims especially at enhancing cooperation between international and national state-builders. Other examples are the US Office on the Co-ordination for Reconstruction and Stabilisation (O/CRS)[1], established in 2004, or the Canadian Stabilisation and Reconstruction Task Force (START) in 2005.

With the shift from failure to fragility, the narrow understanding of states as an embodiment of authority or as a set of core institutions, was broadened to include state-society relations (Brinkerhoff 2007, 4; Rocha Menocal 2011). The OECD (2013, 11), for example, identified states as fragile if they 'lack the ability to develop mutually constructive relations with society and […] have a weak capacity to carry out basic governance functions'. Legitimacy received a central place in the second generation of state fragility/statebuilding debate, and the initial statebuilding focus on capacity and institution building was broadened, to include a wide range of activities that aimed at reshaping state-society relations. This was most prominently operationalised in the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) in Afghanistan. Beyond civil-military co-operation, the PRTs also used so called Quick Impact

Projects as means to build the legitimacy of the state by 'providing immediately tangible benefits to the population - 'quick wins' - that underpin their confidence in the state and the political process that it represents' (SU n.D, 11; see also Gordon 2014). The new statebuilding programmes, also promoted civil society engagement in statebuilding, and placed one focus on the 'empowerment' of citizens, here especially disadvantaged and minority groups. Civil society organisations and even citizens were expected to participate in the statebuilding exercise, and an increasing number of community-driven reconstruction initiatives were now designed to support the participation of citizens in the attempt to reconstruct institutions and to build states from the bottom up (Cliffe et al. 2003).

The interdepartmental co-operation, the stepwise approach from peace enforcement to stabilization to statebuilding, and an increasing acknowledgement of local structures and actors further widened statebuilding practice. Interventions incorporated a broad number of activities combining security promotion with peace building and development, and including programmes as diverse as the promotion of democratisation, institution building, bureaucracy promotion, support of rule of law, human rights and political participation, economic development, poverty reduction and welfare provision etc. However, while the practices of these interventions might not have changed significantly, their integration into the statebuilding framework provided them with new meaning (Chandler 2010, 10).

Defining Fragility: Which states are fragile, and what exactly is failing?

The rise of the twin concepts of state failure/statebuilding is not matched by their conceptual coherence. A number of scholars have criticised the state failure/fragility concepts[2] for their lack of conceptual clarity and failure to provide empirical evidence (Hill 2005; Hagmann and Hoehne 2009; Patrick 2007; Brinkerhoff 2014). The broad variety of terms – failure, fragility, decay, collapse, weakness – already indicates conceptual ambiguity and challenges further

theorising (Collinson et al. 2010, chap. 2). These labels have unclear or overlapping meanings, and are often used without specifying characteristics or criteria of failure or weakness (Scott 2007). However, a minimalist understanding of failure can be carved out from the bulk of the state failure literature. The majority of authors seem to agree on three core functions of a state, among them the provision of security, the promotion of welfare (or basic needs), and a minimal degree of legitimacy and acceptance by the population. Accordingly, a state fails if it is unable to fulfil these core functions, and failure thus has the three features of authority failure (security gap); service entitlements failure (capacity gap); and legitimacy failure (legitimacy gap) (Milliken and Krause 2002; Weinstein et al. 2004, 14f; Stewart and Brown 2009; Ghani and Lockhart 2008). The Commission on Weak States and US National Security used such a minimalist understanding of failure, when it classified in 2004 around 50-60 countries as weak (Weinstein et al. 2004, 14).

Even if this minimalist understanding is accepted, the challenge remains to empirically identify if the core functions are fulfilled and to measure the degree of failure. A broad range of categories and indicators have been developed over the years to identify failure and measure the degree of weakness. The most prominent of these are the Political Instability Task Force (PITF)[3], and the Fund for Peace (FFP), which annually publish a Fragile States Index (until 2014 called Failed States Index). PITF provided a longitudinal assessment of state failure. With its intellectual roots in conflict studies, state failure was equated with chronic violence and civil conflict (Carment et al. 2010, 16) and failure identified in four violent phenomena: revolutionary wars, ethnic wars, genocide/politicide[4] and adverse regime change. Every subcategory integrated a broad variety of empirical cases. Under regime change, for example, the PITF listed the (violent) victory of Fidel Castro in Cuba in 1959, the coup in Chile 1973 or the killing of Liberia's president Samuel Doe in the war in Liberia in 1990. Similarly diverse phenomena were grouped together as ethnic or

revolutionary wars, among the latter, for example, the Islamic Revolution in Iran from 1978 to 1979, the 'revolutionary movement in China in 1989' and the war in Tajikistan (1992-98) (SFTF 2002). If state failure, however, serves as catch-all category for different types of mass violence and crisis, its analytical value remains highly questionable.

The FFP's States Fragility Index relies on another, only partly overlapping set, of 12 indicators, among them six indicators related to political, four to social and two to economic developments. They comprise, for example, state legitimacy, security, public services, the rise of factionalised elites, refugee movements, or economic decline. In its 2016 report, 71 countries were identified as being at risk of failure, albeit to varying degrees. 32 countries received a high warning, 23 an alert, eight a high alert, and another eight a very high alert (http://fsi.fundforpeace.org/). Other attempts to analytically and empirically grasp failure include the OECD-DAC database and its yearly published state failure report. It identified for example 51 countries as fragile in 2014. In 2016, the UK's Department for International Development provided a new list of 64 fragile countries and regions (DFID 2016). The DFID list draws its data from other indices, but sub-divides degrees of high fragility (17 countries), moderate fragility (19), and low fragility (18). It additionally identifies neighbouring high fragility states (10), taking account of the risk of spill-over effects. The differences in numbers, indicators, matrices, and typologies are symptomatic of the difficulty in defining failure and applying labels such as weak, fragile or failed to particular states (Putzel and Di John 2012). Above all, they challenge the empirical validity and the analytical usefulness of the failure concept and confirm a general lack of theorisation.

The concept of failure/fragility nonetheless continues to guide statebuilding policies and to produce a wide set of prescriptions and interventions. Without a coherent conceptual basis, state failure runs the risk of being equated either with underdevelopment and poverty and/or with violence. While it is common sense that countries characterised by large-scale

violence or civil war have a governance problem, most low-income countries are also likely to have difficulties fulfilling the criteria of stability and can thus be characterised as fragile. A proper differentiation between fragile states and developing countries is missing (Putzel and Di John 2012). Patrick (2006) additionally criticized that many policymakers and some academics have taken the main assertion that state failure/fragility constitutes a major challenge for international security for granted, although little empirical evidence has been provided to underscore the connection and causal direction between weakness and security. Some authors argue that the conceptual ambiguity of failure makes it especially attractive for policymakers and practitioners (Patrick 2007; Brinkerhoff 2014). Ambiguous and oversimplified concepts allow practitioners to apply one-size-fits-all approaches to countries with quite heterogeneous characteristics and problems and policy makers to obfuscate their own political interests (Patrick 2007, 647). Such concepts additionally 'reduce the burden of information processing for decision makers in global governance organisations' (Brinkerhoff 2014, 337).

Lack of conceptual coherence, doubt about the analytical utility of the concept, problems of empirical identification of failure and measurement of fragility, are complemented by problems of causality and the separation of causes and effects of failure. Brinkerhoff proposed to consider fragility as a 'wicked problem set', contested in its definition, ill-formulated and inherently complex, and comprising 'multiple interdependencies and causal connections' (Brinkerhoff 2014, 334), as no matter which problems are identified, they 'can be viewed as a nested symptom of another problem' (Brinkerhoff 2014, 333). In spite of the discomfort with the state failure concept, it continues to guide a large number of joint donor initiatives, for example the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States (2011), or the discussions around the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals, in which fragility was identified as a major obstacle to reaching these goals. It often

seems that governments, international organisations, NGOs or think tanks develop their own 'shopping lists' of failure, based more on prevailing ideologies or the will to intervene than on solid empirical (and preferably comparative) assessments. This, and the practice to export a particular model of the state has raised suspicion that statebuilding is just a new way of promoting Western hegemony. The next section will outline some of these concerns.

Liberal Statebuilding in Crisis?

Both the concept of state failure and the practice of statebuilding are under critique. Cox's (1981) famous differentiation between problem-solving and critical approaches is applied in this section to differentiate between two strands of this critique. The observations of both strands overlap, but they provide different interpretations for the identified problems and often arrive at different conclusions. The problem-solving strand stems in large part from within the statebuilding circles, including applied academic and policy-relevant research. This strand accepts the main assumptions of state failure, but assesses shortcomings and reflects on lessons learnt in order to improve the identification of failure and the practice of statebuilding. The 'critical strand', in contrast, challenges the basic assumptions, especially the liberal peace framework in which statebuilding interventions are embedded. Critical authors emphasise the need to identify how knowledge production and statebuilding practice are embedded in relations of power, and to reveal the interests behind them. Critical approaches are highly sceptical of the benevolent rhetoric and criticise the search for technical solution to highly political problems.

Applied studies focus on the practice of statebuilding and technicalities of the interventions. Their main critique is framed in terms of aid effectiveness, and they regularly emphasise the absence of harmonised approaches and co-ordination among the vast range of statebuilding actors, the failure to jointly sequence interventions and the tendency to prioritise

particular aspects of peace or statebuilding (such as institution building) to the detriment of others (such as legitimacy). They also criticise that programmes are often not adapted to local conditions, and are dominated by international experts who do not engage in depth with local actors. Insufficient funding, different time-horizons of the donors, lack of long-term commitment and long-term planning, and limited flexibility due to bureaucratic hurdles, are also regularly criticised (Paris and Sisk 2009a; Paris 2009; Lockhart and Ghani 2009; Rubin 2006; Manning and Trzeciak-Duval 2010; Carment et al. 2010, 156-157).

This critique found resonance in policy circles and among major donor countries. It was aggregated into lessons learned, and codified in policy recommendations and guidelines, among them most prominently the Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States (OECD 2007), which were, in 2007, collectively adopted by the 30 OECD Development Assistance Countries (OECD-DAC). However, although considerable efforts of donors and international organisations to improve their practices were acknowledged, most of the targets were not met four years later when the OECD (2011) conducted a progress review. Harmonisation of policies was largely lacking, and information-sharing and co-ordination could not be sustained over a longer time frame. While the OECD interprets this mainly as a technical and organisational problem, Paris (2009) argues that co-ordination failure is caused by conflicting objectives, values and ideals of the intervenors. Additionally, the long list of issues to be tackled and the complex agenda of statebuilding is difficult, if not impossible, to be translated into practice. It was therefore suggested to reduce the objectives of statebuilding and to adapt objectives to the degree of failure. In many cases, for example, good governance might work better if objectives were reduced to enable at least ‘good enough governance’ (Grindle 2007).

Another critique addresses the difficulty to actually implement policies and agreements that are developed at a central state level, or in headquarters of international

organisations. Actors 'on the ground' have to deal with complex challenges on a daily basis, and their actions are often more shaped by the need to make fast decisions and to react to the ever-changing situation of conflict than by the implementation of a strategy developed in the main headquarters. Often, policy frames and statebuilding templates enter into conflict with local social rules and norms and the friction between them needs to be addressed by the state builders on the ground (Barnett and Zürcher 2009; Millar et al. 2013). While the 'problem-solving camp' tries to improve communication and to speed-up (joint) operational responses, the 'critical camp' points to the fundamental problem of transferring ideas and models from one cultural context to another, a problem that social anthropology has elaborated as translation (Rottenburg 2009, esp. 99-103.).[1] Translation involves active agents, intermediaries or brokers (Sally Engle 2006) who pick up a concept in one setting, strip it from its particular context, reinterpret it and place it in another setting where the model reacts with other, already available, repertoires of meaning. While passing through the long chain of international development, concepts thus necessarily change their meaning and the translation outcome usually differs significantly from its 'original'. This observation stresses contingency and the emergent and unexpected outcome of social interactions (including discourses) and challenges the general ability to plan social transformations and thus to socially engineer societies and states.

Among the regularly repeated critique that overlap between the 'problem-solving' and the 'critical camp' is the failure to contextualise programmes. Statebuilders, for example, continue to focus on central institution building instead of addressing state-society relations (OECD 2011). While the focus on state-society relations would require a deeper engagement with local actors, statebuilders prefer to apply conventional development frameworks to

[1] Rottenburg builds on Actor Network Theory and their identification of translation as major mechanism in forming and maintaining social networks (Callon and Latour 1981).

fragile states, and rely on blueprints without alignment to local conditions or 'local ownership' (OECD 2011). The bureaucratisation of development and the application of one-size-fits-all designs are not restricted to statebuilding but constitute a long-established critique in development and peacebuilding. The 'problem-solving camp' interprets this mainly as a technical problem, caused by the failure to develop or use adequate analytical tools, and to establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. The 'critical strand', in contrast, interprets this failure as systemic, as part of the contradictions and dilemmas of external interventions that aim at bettering societies they do not – and often do not even try to – understand. In the centre of the critical approach is the acknowledgment of the social relations that structure statebuilding and the enormous power differentials between the intervenors and the intervened upon.

This power gap, among others, is displayed in the taken-for-granted framework of liberal peace. Instead of discussing the type of state to be built or strengthened, intervenors rely on an idealised and de-historicised version of the Western state, ignore the violent and disruptive trajectory of European statebuilding, and use their superior power position in the global political economy to impose this idealised model, including its implicit norms and values, on less powerful, peripheral countries (Paris 2002; Mallaby 2002; Marquette and Beswick 2011). The partnership and participatory rhetoric of the intervention is, in practice, often contrasted by the paternalistic and top-down behaviour of intervenors. They undermine locally driven peace- and statebuilding processes, and contribute to the bifurcation of social worlds, and the growing social distance and 'frictions' between the intervenor and intervened upon (Chopra 2000; Suhrke 2009; Autesserre 2010; Lemay-Hébert 2011).

Another line of critique addresses the point that statebuilding does not really build states, but instead contributes to the establishment of a narrow circle of political authorities (Marquette and Beswick 2011). These elites are usually closely aligned to the donors, have

learned to juggle the jargon of international statebuilding and manipulate labels and buzz-words (such as fragility, local ownership, participation), at the same time as using international resources to their own personal or political advantage (Heiduk 2014). Such forms of elite (and non-elite) capture and the fraudulent strategies and misuse of aid by local elites are identified by both camps. The 'problem-solvers' react by developing measures to enhance transparency and accountability of aid and to monitor its impact more tightly. The 'critical camp', instead, interprets these strategies as a result of the power relations that structure international interventions. Accordingly, development has created, and is placed in, a dual structure of power, in which the local side has become increasingly invisible for the external intervenor. Reflecting on their dependent position as aid receivers, southern actors have developed a broad repertoire of 'strategies of extraversion' (Bayart 2009), that is practices intended to create and to capture 'a rent generated by dependency' (Bayart 2000, 222).

The dual power structure also leads to the rise of local gatekeepers and intermediaries – in the case of statebuilding, the new state elites – who operate in the realm between the external donor and local receiver of aid, and use this in-between position to manipulate, direct and consume external resources and contacts. While this is characteristic of all external interventions, external statebuilding tends towards the erection of 'phantom states' (Chandler 2006, 192ff.), that is states that have lost any linkages to their population, but merely exist as nodes for external intervenors. Actors behind the façade of formal statehood (including 'phantom elites'), however, continue to define their own rules and order societies in a way that remains largely hidden from the external intervenors.

It is thus not a lack of local ownership – to use one of the contemporary buzz-words of international development – but the failure of the intervenors to understand how exactly locals own the statebuilding process. The (hidden) adaptation of intervention practices to

local social rules, values and world views can be interpreted as re-appropriation of the state by local actors, as local resistance against external impositions, as frictions[5] between external and local actors, or simply (as problem-solvers tend to do) as misappropriation and diversion of international resources. The problem, however, remains. Externally built states often lack anchorage in their societies and fail to generate legitimacy.

Already the guiding assumptions that state weakness is accompanied by social disorder, that fragility equals weak governance, and that failure leads to social chaos are problematic. Several authors have shown that societies with weak formal state institutions tend to rely on strong informal networks and institutions and do not necessarily lack leadership but are characterised by a variety of social orders and forms of political authority (Reno 2000; Bakonyi and Stuvoy 2005; chapters in Bøås and Dunn 2007). The ignorance of these actors and institutions was labelled as a main 'failure of the state failure debate' (Hagmann and Hoehne 2009). Post-development studies have shown that such failures are not accidental but part of the Euro-centric imagination of the post-colonial world. Embedded in the modernization ideology, post-colonial societies or states are conceptualised as transitional or incomplete, and can only be described negatively in terms of deficits, deficiencies and failures, that is by what they are not (developed for example) or what they do not have (functioning or strong states) (Chakrabarty 2000, 30-37; Hill 2005). Scholars even lack the vocabulary to analyse and comprehend what post-colonial societies actually are and how they function. In the tradition of Michel Foucault (1980) who emphasised the nexus of knowledge and power, post-development studies interpret the identification of deficits in form of under-development, weak statehood, or fragility as a technique of power that links knowledge with interventions (Escobar 1995). The mapping of fragile states thus produces them as objects to be intervened upon in a specific way, through peace-enforcement, stabilization and

statebuilding, and this has given rise to a previously unknown 'level of intrusion and degree of social engineering' (Duffield 2002, 1052).

This critique links to another question of whether liberal peace is indeed suitable for societies with different political, cultural, and religious heritages (Samuels and von Einsiedel 2003; Paris and Sisk 2009b, 305-306). While parts of the problem-solving as well as 'critical camp' request in-depth, better and more serious engagement with local actors, one part of the 'critical camp' challenges exactly the 'moral framing of difference' and the consolidation of 'them' versus 'us' dichotomies (Duffield 2002, 1050) that underlies these requests. The search for the local maintains an 'ontology of Otherness' (Sabaratnam 2011), now displayed as difference between the liberal (western) and non-liberal (post-colonial) subject, and justifies the subjection of the latter to betterment through capacity building and empowerment (Chandler 2010). These interventions may be framed as attempts to save, develop or secure the (illiberal, non-rational, non-enlightened) 'Other', but they mainly legitimise external regulatory control. According to Duffield (2010) the main aim of these new interventionist frameworks is to police and contain informal and undocumented migration. Rather than overcoming poverty, these interventions are erecting new barriers that entrench the North-South divide, cement global structures of power and support the hegemony of the global North. This hegemony, however, is exercised as denial of power and interest and instead reframed as a therapeutic attempt towards empowerment and capacity building (Chandler 2006) and executed as administrative-technical tasks to ensure institutional efficiency, transparency and, above all, equity and participation.

Conclusion

This chapter traced the rise of the twin concepts of state failure and statebuilding, which were promoted by and further evolved in the co-operation between academia and policy. Although

state failure is conceptually weak and built on shaky empirical foundations, it initiated a seemingly ever-increasing number of statebuilding initiatives. State failure (later fragility) connected debates and discourses that were previously divided into the fields of development, international politics, defence or law, and embedded them into a security framework. This had far-reaching practical consequences for the global South. An increasing number of military interventions aimed at stabilizing and rebuilding failed states, with ever-broadening goals, ranging from the promotion of democracy, rule of law, human rights, and civil society, to poverty reduction, security provision and institution building.

This chapter has also provided an overview of the main critique. While the 'problem-solving camp' aims to improve the identification of failure as well as the practice of statebuilding, critical approaches interpret statebuilding as a new form of global power politics. Increasingly, however, the 'problem-solving camp' seems to share doubts that social engineering is at all possible, emphasising the complex nature of interventions and their manifold uncontrollable and unintended consequences. This insight gave rise to the third generation of failure debate, which no longer focuses on states or state-society relations, and is also no longer confined to developing countries. Instead, it defines fragility as multidimensional, and characterized by 'accumulation and combination of risks combined with insufficient capacity by the state, system and/or communities to manage it, absorb it or mitigate its consequences' (OECD 2016, 6). Instead of producing lists of fragile states and designing programmes to re-build them, the new approach aims at enhancing resilience, and thus at strengthening the ability of states, societies, and people to cope with danger (World Bank 2013). The fragility/resilience approach is already interpreted as a new and post-liberal form of governing complexity. The debate if resilience has the potential to move beyond modernist binaries and statist approaches, or if it is mainly a more sophisticated form of neo-liberal individualization of responsibilities (Joseph 2016) cannot be taken up here.

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Endnotes:

[1] This Office was in 2011 integrated into the US State Department's Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations.

[2] For simplicity, the chapter sticks to the term failure, albeit fragility became more prominent in the 2000s. Up to date, however, multiple terms with overlapping meanings circulate in academia and policy.

[3] Previously called the State Failure Task Force (SFTF).

[4] Genocide/Politicide is defined in the SFTF report as 'sustained policies […] that result in the deaths of a substantial portion of a communal or political group'. In genocides groups are victimized on basis of 'their communal (that is, ethnolinguistic or religious) characteristics', while in 'politicides, victims are defined primarily in terms of their political opposition to the regime or dominant groups.' (SFTF 2002, 3-4).

[5] The metaphor of frictions was used by Tsing (2005) to explore the complex and global social interactions in the rain forests of Indonesia.